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THE WAY
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THE PREACHERS PRAY

264

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The Way The Preachers Pray

264

*With Notes
By One of Them*

[*William Goodrich Smith*]

1900

*William G Smith & Company
Minneapolis Minnesota*

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Story
From
Chicago
"Advance"

"Just think of it: four public prayers last Sunday!" said a young minister when speaking to a brother minister about what he had been doing on the Lord's Day. His words and manner were jocular, but there was a measure of seriousness under the mirthful words. He did not shrink from the effort of preaching, for he might make full preparation for that before entering the pulpit; but to stand before a congregation and voice their petitions before God four times each Sunday and forty or more Sundays each year, was, he thought, something which might almost make one shrink from entering the ministry. And he was right in substance, though his manner of stating the responsibilities of pastoral prayer bordered on the irreverent.

Foreword

The preceding story from the Advance, a Congregational weekly published in Chicago, will serve as a fitting introduction to the following study.

It occurred to the publisher a year or two ago, that while the sermons of clergymen were being constantly discussed, their prayers were hardly ever mentioned.

It was presumed that prayers represented a part of the service of public worship that, by common consent, was to be exempted from criticism or comment.

He could not see why they should form an exception and so, for the following reasons, he determined to investigate.

Public prayers are public utterances as much as sermons.

They often influence the mind of the worshipper more than the sermon.

They reveal the mind and heart of the preacher as much as do his discourses, and have a psychological value.

Prayer and sermon are different parts of the same service and ought to harmonize.

The
Plan
Pursued

The preaching of the representative pulpits in all denominations today recognizes the advances in science and in all branches of knowledge. Does the praying keep pace?

When the publisher decided to investigate, he set about it by sending stenographers to representative churches of the various denominations in half a dozen of our leading cities, to take the prayers upon Sundays selected at random, so that the prayers obtained represent the average praying.

The prayers embodied in this little book represent denominationally:

Methodist — Baptist — Presbyterian — Congregationalist — Universalist — Disciples of Christ — Independent.

They were taken in six prominent cities.

In no case did the preacher know that he was being reported.

Unity
In
Diversity

The prayers thus obtained by the publisher were turned over to a minister, selected by him, for comment. That minister does not know:

Where the prayers were taken.

Who made them.

When they were made.

To what denomination the clergymen who made them belong.

After reading the prayers over carefully, the minister who is making the comments is obliged to declare that he can not locate a single one denominationally.

This admission is significant. The fact shows the deep, underlying unity of Christendom in spite of surface differences.

*The Principles upon which the comments
on the prayers proceed are laid down in the
following introductory essay.*

The Essay

**PRAYER IN THE LIGHT
OF MODERN THOUGHT**

**God's
Mercy
Seat**

"God's mercy-seat is no mere stall set by the vulgar road-side, where every careless passer-by may put an easy hand out to snatch any glittering blessing that catches his eye. It stands in the holiest of holies. We can come to it only by veils and by altars of purification. To enter into it we must enter into God."

PHILLIPS BROOKS.

Religion, as well as everything else, began at the bottom, began in the rudest and most savage conceptions, and has been rising through the ages. Around Lake Mendota, in one of our neighboring states, fragments of the old Indian trail remain. The rest of it has been worn away by the waves. For years they have been washing down the banks until only here and there a portion of the trail is to be seen. Other paths have been marked out by the feet of new generations. So the waves of progress wash away old tracks of religious thought, and humanity makes new and better ones.

Idea
Of
God

The earliest notions of God, even among the Jews, were exceedingly crude and imperfect. God was supposed to be only a larger man, with passions and desires good and bad—a larger man who could be placated with burnt-offerings and moved by petitions. In the prophets the Jews reached the loftiest point in their conceptions of God—one whose ways were higher than the ways of men and His thoughts than their thoughts. The teachings of the prophets were continued by Jesus who summed up the whole matter in the words, "God is a spirit." He taught the woman of Samaria, upon that memorable day by the well of Sychar, that God could not be localized in space, that He was not partial, that He knew nothing of favoritism; but that He could be worshipped in Samaria as well as at Jerusalem. Every spot of earth was blessed by His presence, and in all things was His handiwork manifested. Upon evil and good descended the benediction of rain and sunshine. He was not a magnified man,

with human passions, who could be moved by the incense of flattery or the appeals of selfishness to depart from His invariable and beneficent methods! It has been well said that "God is too great and wise and good to be arbitrary or fickle, or deal with the world otherwise than in an orderly way, which intelligent creatures like man can find out and depend upon and trust."

**Idea
Of
Prayer**

With changes in our ideas of God, come also changes in our ideas of worship, in our methods of approach to Him. All prayer arises from man's feeling of dependence upon some greater power back of him and about him. It is not by his own will that he comes into life, that the changes of life occur, that the processes of nature go on, that he passes beyond the horizon at last. This feeling of dependence has been expressed in absurd and grotesque ways. It is a real, genuine, necessary feeling; but it has often taken shape in prayers that entirely misconceived the Divine character and rule.

**Divine
Interference**

Men have been led to depend upon Divine interference in the ordinary course of events, to look upon prayer as a short cut to prosperity, to think that God would give to one for his supplication what another must earn by the sweat of his brow. Men have looked upon prayer as they do upon sending an order to the store to obtain what is wanted. People say, "If I could not get anything from God, I should never pray to Him again!" What they mean is that if they could not get a loaf of bread, or a dollar, or recovery from sickness when they ask it, they would never again lift their voices to the throne of the Eternal!

**The
Goat
Grazing**

Lowell says in the "Biglow Papers,"
"Seeing a goat the other day kneeling in
order to graze with less trouble, it
seemed to me a type of the common no-
tion of prayer. Most people are ready
enough to go down on their knees for
material blessings, but how few for those
spiritual gifts which are alone an answer
to our orisons, if we but knew it."

One day at a fish-hatchery the writer saw the keeper feeding the speckled trout. He threw a dipperful of chopped meat into the pond. Instantly there was a furious rush and scramble; the water was lashed into foam, and it was impossible in the darting and squirming mass of trout to distinguish one fish from another. To many men, even today, prayer is simply an unseemly scramble for material gifts!

Prosperity is gained by industry. This is the rule. It depends upon the use of our powers. This eternal condition is never suspended. A thousand prayers for success are worth less than one day's hard work! Frederick Douglass once said that he never obtained his freedom until he prayed with his feet. One man cannot secure, by special Divine favor, that for which the mass of humanity must toil with hands or brain!

Prayer
And
Natural
Law

In the sphere of natural law human entreaty seems equally futile. One sailor prays for a favoring wind, when that prayer means adverse winds to other vessels. Of two neighbors, one prays for rain, the other for sunshine. At the time of our Revolution prayers went up for victory on both sides of the ocean. In our Civil War north and south vied with each other in the fervency of their supplications. In neither case could the result have been affected by the prayers. Where the prayers of equally sincere and devout men conflict, Omnipotence itself cannot answer both. Where natural forces are involved, there can be no particular interference without disturbing the balance of the whole. "Would you say," demands Phillips Brooks, "that the good man may ask of God, things that He is unwilling to bestow and gain them? But why is God unwilling to bestow them except for one of two causes; either that the giving of them would injure the soul that asks them, or

that it would interfere with some plan
that the divine wisdom has shaped for
the universe at large?"

The
Unanswered
Prayers

Books have been written containing remarkable answers to prayers; but what of the unanswered ones? What of the multitudes that have fallen like withered blossoms to the dust? Cases of deliverance from accident or shipwreck have, indeed, been recorded; but how many a ship has gone down while shrieks for mercy were piercing the storm! How many a sick person has prayed for recovery and died with that prayer upon his lips! The outcome does not depend upon the prayer, but upon the presence or absence of other causes. A rotten bridge will give way, an unsafe vessel will sink, an incurable disease will conquer.

All things do, indeed, depend upon the power which we call God, but not in such sense that they are adjusted according to human wishes. How little does any man know how they ought to be adjusted! We do well to recognize the fact of our dependence, and stop there.

The attitude of the soul in the presence of that Divine Power should be reverence, gratitude, love and trust. When during long-continued rain the Bishops ordered a general prayer for sunshine, Charles Kingsley refused to read it from his pulpit, "First, because even his limited knowledge of the laws of nature told him that much rain was necessary; secondly, because with his limited knowledge of the laws of nature, he would not criticise the Highest Wisdom." In perfect confidence that what is best for us will be done for us, we may commit ourselves and all our interests to the higher Intelligence and Love before which we bow.

"I would not have thee otherwise
Than what thou still must be;
Yea, thou art God; and what thou art
Is ever best for me!"

**The
Function
Of
Prayer**

While the sphere of prayer is narrowed, the function of prayer is exalted. The two things that characterized the prayer of Jesus upon the mountain of transfiguration still belong to all true prayer; elevation of mind, communion with the spiritual world.

In prayer the mind is exalted. This experience came to Jesus in the midst of gathering opposition. For the moment he was lifted above the clamor of tongues, above the strifes and tumults of men. He found peace and consolation. In the presence of his Father all things else vanished. His spirit was strengthened. In the valley there was work to be done. From the mountain of prayer he descended to the vale of service. One may be so lifted up by his prayers that his faculties may be quickened, his resolution strengthened. He may become more clear in perception, more quick to execute. Thus, while God does not perform his tasks for him, the man himself may be brought into habits of industry. He may become more of a man, and becoming more of a man, he may do wonders. His prayer helps him, not by dispensing with industry and effort, and bringing directly from God in some miraculous way the outward success, but by lifting up his mind, intensifying his purpose, and stimulating his will! This in-

tensity of purpose and strength of will may even, in many cases, act upon the body, so as to effect deliverance from disease. The mind, in prayer, may assert its supremacy.

Prayer opens the mind to all higher influences. We commune with the Great Spirit that pervades the universe. This fellowship is worth more than all things else. What can be more to us than God himself? Emerson says, "The debts of God are paid with God." Is not father or mother more to the child than any gift? Is not my friend worth more than any advantage I reap from him? The lower offices of friendship are right and proper, but to stop with them is to stop in a pestilential swamp and not to reach the "mountain height that neighbors on the stars." The greatest favor that friendship bestows is friendship; The greatest benefit we derive from God is God. In prayer the soul is open to those influences that come we know not whence, unless they come from the great source of all things—influences that give peace, that give enlarged vision, that still the troubled seas of sorrow, or that rouse to heroic virtue!

**How
Spirit
Comes**

They do not come at set times and seasons. They do not always come when the thoughts are fixed upon religious subjects. The spirit is still like the wind that bloweth where it listeth, defying us to tell whence it comes and whither it goes. It may come in the quiet hour of meditation; it may come in the crowded street; it may come amid the exacting demands of business; it may come as we bend over the pages of some inspired poet; as we walk among the trees and flowers.

We are told of Robert Burns, that "it was his delight to wander along the banks of the Ayr, whose stream is now immortal, and to listen to the song of the blackbird at the close of the summer's day. But still greater was his pleasure, as he himself informs us, in walking on the sheltered side of a wood, in a cloudy winter's day, and hearing the storm rave among the trees; and more elevated still his delight to ascend some eminence during the agitations of nature; to stride along its summit while the lightnings flashed around him; and amidst the howlings of the tempest, to apostrophize the spirit of the storm." "Such situations," he declares "most favorable to devotion. Wrapt in enthusiasm, I seem to ascend towards him who walks on the wings of the wind!"

Stream
And
Boat

Prayer is the repose of the mind upon God, confidence in his laws and methods. While our prayers can not change them, we may be brought into harmony with those laws and methods. The current of the stream may not turn to accommodate our boat, but we can so place our boat upon the bosom of the stream, that it will be borne along to the majestic ocean. We may not be able to change the direction of the wind, but we can so adjust our sail that the breezes of heaven will waft us safely onward. We may not change by prayer the mind of God, or the laws of nature which express His will; but we may so change our own mind that it shall acquiesce in His will, seeing that all which happens under impartial and unvarying law is best to happen, rejoicing when even our own defeats and disappointments subserve the universal good. Whatever changes are necessary must take place in man and not in God!

Prayer is aspiration. Unconquered lands of beauty and goodness rise before the soul's vision. "The thoughts of souls that would aspire as mine are all prayer," says Bulwer's Zanoni.

Scene
From
Hill-top

Not many weeks ago the writer climbed over rocks and among bushes, stumbling over fallen logs, lacerating his hands upon briars, to the top of a high bluff that overlooked a beautiful, far-spreading valley. As he emerged from the shrubbery the entire scene burst upon his vision. Here and there houses dotted the plain. Around them were green fields and pastures. Now and then the river flashed through the foliage along its banks. The old mill sang in the distance. The village lay nestling against the opposite hills. Over all the bluest of skies serenely smiled. Prayer is the mount of vision from which the soul catches views of glory, of righteousness, truth, beauty, and love, that have not yet been added to its possessions. Prayer is the mountain of transfiguration where the soul is changed into the image of that to which it aspires.

**Water-Drop
In
Muddy
Pool**

Here is a fable: "One day a drop of water lay in a pool on the city street. It was stained and soiled. But looking up, it saw the blue sky, and the pure heavens and the white sunbeams dancing everywhere, and began to long for purity, for a nobler, worthier life. It looked up into the sky, and its longing became an earnest prayer to be made clean and beautiful. And its prayer was heard. Presently the little soiled drop was lifted up out of the gutter into the air—higher and higher. Then the breeze caught it and it was wafted away, away, and by and by it rested in the bosom of a rose, a drop of pure, crystal dew. So God answers our prayers for holiness. 'Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.'"

"Whatsoe'er thou lovest, that become
thou must;

God, if thou lovest God; dust, if thou
lovest dust."

What are the characteristic prayers of the New Testament? How astonishing that their spirit is for all ages—whatever the state of scientific knowledge. They are as pertinent today, as they were before Science had revolutionized our thought of nature or of God. Take the outline model that has come down to us—"Our Father! Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done." Then the other three, "Lead us not into temptation, deliver us from evil, forgive as we forgive." Floating upon that luminous sea of spirituality is the one petition for daily bread—not for ease or luxury, or large prosperity, but for the actual need of the day!

Prayers
Of
New
Testament

**The
Supreme
Prayer
Of
Jesus**

What were the prayers of Jesus himself, so far as we know? May they not all be condensed into that sentence wrung from the agony of Gethsemane, "Not my will, O God, but thine be done?" This for himself—for his disciples, what? Keep them from the evil in the world, sanctify them through thy truth, make them one!

What were Paul's prayers? The only one of which we have any record that he offered for relief from physical suffering—the thorn in the flesh—was denied. His one aspiration for himself was that he might know Christ,—that he might have his life, his purity, his purpose. His one desire for others—he tells us for what he prayed: “We do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering and joyfulness.”

Paul's
Thorn
In
The
Flesh

These are the characteristic prayers of the New Testament. The thoughts of these men are constantly turned from the outside to the inside, from the shell to the kernel. They touch the earth only that they may soar to the skies. They do not spend their time, like the fowls of

**Fowls
Of
The
Barnyard**

the barnyard, scratching the ground for worms and grains of corn; they aspire, first of all, to the kingdom of God and his righteousness! Such prayer is always quiet and simple and reverent. "You young ones," said an old negro-auntie, "you young ones make too much noise with your glory and your hallelu! When you've got the real grace, the real glory, you will feel so quiet and peace-like—just as if you were in the stable at Bethlehem, and the mother had given you the sleeping babe to hold!"

No form of words is needed. Indeed, our loftiest moods are often broken when we try to put our feelings into words. That was a good thought of the simple shepherd boy who was heard in the hill-pasture, away from the village, repeating the alphabet. "Why do you do this?" asked one who heard him. His answer was, "I cannot say a prayer; I do not go to school, and no one teaches me to pray, and I do not know fine words; but I have learned that God is good and very kind; and so I think that he will hear and make himself a prayer out of my A B C."

The holy Bengel, worn and weary with his day's labor, threw himself upon his couch, simply saying, "Lord, it is all understood between us." Every genuine aspiration is prayer, every noble thought or emotion is prayer, every desire for God, and every feeling of sympathy for man!

There is a remarkable passage in Philippians. "Be careful—or anxious—for nothing; but in everything, by prayer

**The
Peace
Of
God**

and supplication, let your requests be made known unto God." Then what? Everything will come that you desire? Not so. "The peace of God that passeth understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ." The peace of God—better than houses and lands, better than fame and prosperity, better than health and pleasure. When that peace descends, and enters the soul through the gateway of prayer—the face of the worshipper is illumined as was the face of Jesus upon the mountain of transfiguration!

The Prayers

Every inmost aspiration
is God's angel undefiled.

And in every "Come my Father"
slumbers deep a "Here my child."

Almighty Father, we come into thy courts this evening, and into thy fatherly presence with earnest desire to worship thee. Thou art infinitely great. Thou art infinitely tender. Thou art full of mercy. Thou art full of love.

We thank thee for this beautiful spring day: for all the temporal blessings which thou hast given us, and we pray thee to shed upon us abundantly thy divine spirit.

Help us to use the blessings that have come to us this day for the good of some other life, and may we share the mercies which thou scatterest about us with those around us.

We thank thee for the great privilege which thou dost offer us to become fellow workers with thee. Help us in our endeavors for the advancement of thy kingdom.

We turn to thee in confidence, our Father, for thy blessing, and we thank thee for thy many mercies toward us. We are conscious of sin. We are conscious that our lives fall far short of what

thou wouldst have them to be. We pray thee for guidance and help in our efforts to make our lives purer and holier and better. Bring us into more personal relations with thy spirit, so that we may reach a larger and richer life. Help us to feel that our only hope is Christ.

Be with us in our services this evening, and grant us thy blessing.

We ask it in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The prayer that the reader has just finished leaves nothing to be desired so far as the spirit of the prayer is concerned.

It is directly in harmony with the principles upon which these notes and comments proceed.

It is full of aspiration, of sympathy, of the emotion of thankfulness for blessings that have been received.

The phraseology can not be criticised from a theological standpoint. It is not theological, it is religious. This is as it should be. Prayer is feeling rather than logic.

But if these comments are to be anything more than the merest platitudes, they must be perfectly frank and point out what seem to the writer faults as well as excellences. And this must be done, not for the sake of criticising, but to help us all—if possible—make our prayers better.

While prayer is feeling rather than logic, a prayer is also a literary production and must have unity and movement.

Most prayers are utterly extemporaneous, and this is a great mistake. Prayers need not be written—should not be written; but they should be meditated. The minister should think over the needs of his congregation, the experiences of various members of it through the week, and then will he be able to pray with the understanding as well as with the spirit.

The object of the minister's public prayer is to bring his people to the great source of comfort and help, and to produce the spirit of reverence and devotion.

An ill-arranged prayer, with scattering phrases and careless repetitions, is not adapted to this object. A prayer should have a definite and progressive plan,—a beginning, a middle, and most important of all—an end.

The exordium of the little prayer we have placed first is perfect in substance and expression.

In the last paragraph, there is a repetition of the gratitude for temporal

mercies expressed in the second paragraph. The prayer would be better without the first three lines of this paragraph: "We turn to thee in confidence for thy blessing, and we thank thee for thy many mercies towards us." These lines have the appearance of being put in thoughtlessly while the preacher was casting about for a closing thought. Strike them out, and we have a beautiful prayer in all the devotional elements, and also in literary form.

Some of the rules laid down in these comments will have a wider application in the remaining pages of this booklet.

Prayer
Two

O Lord, our God, we worship thee and magnify thy holy name. We give hearty thanks for all thy goodness. We remember that all we have and are we owe to thee. We are the creatures of thy handiwork, the objects of thy universal care. We are the ones for whom thou didst give thyself to die. And we realize this morning, that all along life's journey thou hast led us by thy hand.

And we pray, O God, that thou wilt this morning, as we gather in thy house, meet with us. Make this a moment of blessed fellowship. May our hearts respond to the touch of the divine Spirit. May we, like John of old, be "in the Spirit on the Lord's Day;" and may this be a time of sweet communion with God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

We pray that there may well up in all our hearts a spirit of devout dependence and reverence; may we recognize thee as the Source of all our good; may there come pressing upon every conscience a sense of dependence and responsibility for the great privileges thou

hast bestowed. May we understand that with the gifts thou hast given us, there has come also a responsibility to give. May we realize that we are to receive and then pass on the good word of life; having ourselves been elevated and regenerated by it; may we be the messengers of God to bear the glad tidings to those who yet have not heard it. And we pray that this may be the controlling spirit of this hour. May we realize what it means to be saved; how glorious the privilege to be co-workers with God in the salvation of others.

Enlarge our sympathies this morning. Lead us up to some mount of vision, so that we can see, as Christ sees, the fallen world in its need and degradation, and then, O God, give us somewhat of the sense of sympathy that Jesus feels. May we have a heart to feel as he feels, and thus may we, seeing and feeling, be led to do what Christ would have us do, to help him save the fallen and rescue the lost. We pray, O God, that thy Spirit may thus be given to each worshiper.

May we get into full sympathy with God in his great purpose to save this world.

Bless each one here now; all the homes represented here; all that are related to us, though separated by miles of distance; the Lord be with them. Have mercy upon all that sorrow; upon all hearts that bleed; upon all who are bearing heavy burdens, and who know what it means to have the heart-ache. O God, comfort and sustain them.

Have mercy, O God, upon the sinful and the lost, at home and abroad. Wilt thou, O Father, stir up thy children to realize their responsibility, so that they may run and bear with swift and ready feet, the glad message of Jesus and his love, to all who sit in the shadow of darkness.

Bless our land and country; our president, and all associated with him in authority. Give wisdom, we pray thee, to congress now assembled. May only such things be advanced as shall be for the greatest good of all the people. And grant that those who make the laws shall

keep them; that they shall fear God and have full vision of that which he would have them do.

And we pray that thou wouldst bless all the nations of the earth; that thou wouldst overrule and bring evil devices to naught. Grant that right shall triumph; that Christianity everywhere shall prevail, and that the blessings of Christian civilization may come to the peoples of all the earth; that Africa and Asia and India—all the continents and the islands of the sea, may speedily be brought into the light and liberty of the gospel of the Son of God. Cause that war shall cease, and that right shall evermore prevail.

Hear us, O God, in this our morning prayer. Forgive our sins and wash our hearts clean with the blood that was shed for us. And may we as a church and as a people from this hour, and from this coming week, in which we shall re-dedicate ourselves to God, go forth with firmer tread and with a more valiant spirit; with more persevering faith and a

surer hope, to the conquest of this world for Christ. We ask it in his name who hath taught us to say:

“Our Father, who art in heaven. Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation. But deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, for ever. Amen.”

This prayer is full of aspiration and sympathy.

Note
Two

There are two or three expressions to which the whole of Christendom might not assent; but they are incidental and not of the very texture of the prayer. A critic of the school of Lyman Abbott or Phillips Brooks might object to saying to God, "We are the ones for whom thou didst give thyself to die,"—thus raising the philosophical question as to whether the very God of the universe actually died, or could die, upon Calvary; and suggesting whether the great love of God for men,—which is the thought in the mind of the preacher,—might not have been expressed in a better way.

The other phrase that some of the more progressive—shall we say?—brethren in all denominations might object to is the implication of a vicarious sacrifice in the words, "Wash our hearts clean in the blood that was shed for us."

Still we may drop the technical expression and find in the substance a desire for moral purity through the influ-

ence of Jesus. This is the spirit, whatever the letter.

The prayer is uplifting and helpful. It leads the worshipper into the true attitude towards God and his fellow-men. It palpitates with a desire for larger and richer spiritual life; it breathes a spirit of unselfishness and generosity. We are irresistibly reminded of those lines of Coleridge,

“He prayeth best who loveth best
All things both great and small.”

We can only wonder what the world will be when men realize, in the words of this prayer: “May we understand that with the gifts thou hast given us, there has come also a responsibility to give.” Whittier says:

“To worship rightly is to love each other,
Each smile a hymn, each kindly deed a prayer.”

From a literary point of view, this prayer has unity and movement. The reader feels that he is carried along directly from beginning to end, without interruption or wearisome excursions among endless side issues.

**Prayer
Three**

O Lord, our Heavenly Father, we bless thee that we have another opportunity of speaking with thee. Thou art always within speaking distance; thine eye is always upon us; thine ear open to our prayers. Thou art never weary with us. Our constant cry, our importunity does not affect thee. Thou art not impatient with us; thou art willing and glad to have us come to thee and tell thee our sins and our sorrows and have us unburden our hearts before thee and cast our burdens upon thee.

This thou dost love, because thou art so kind, because thou art our Father; because thy love is more than the love of a father or mother to us and thy love is unchangeable. Those whom thou lovest in the beginning thou wilt love in the end.

We bless thee that we have this faith in thee; that we have faith in the goodness and love of God. We pray thee that thou wilt this day brighten our lives, that thou wilt help us to bear our burden and do our work, and to bear our testi-

mony, and to put down the powers of evil within us. How blessed the faith that enables us to do this!

We pray thee, O Lord, that this faith may deepen in our souls, may strike deeper down to the roots and striking its roots may bring forth fruit. May it grow in both directions, both downward and upward, in righteousness, honesty, benevolence, charity, hope and generosity in our lives, so that we shall not be as barren as the sands of the ground. Blessed are we that have faith in the love of God. Blessed are we that have anything in us or about us whereby we may be enabled to enrich the world. O God, help us to realize that unless we have the elements of faith and hope, we have nothing that can better the world. Help us to realize how vain it is to hope for anything better unless God is sought.

O God, give us this true discernment to know that there is a power which works righteousness, because the Lord loves us, because God omnipotent reigneth; that we are trusting no chapter of

accidents; that our faith is in God, and by that faith the world is to be revolutionized and uplifted.

God, hear us in our prayer tonight; make us strong and send us out to the duty of the week, with a clear consciousness of thy presence, and willingness to help us; and grant that our souls may declare thee exultantly because they are full of hope, because the love of God is in our hearts. Hear us, O Lord. Bless us in this service. May it be acceptable in love for Christ's sake.

Our Father who art in heaven. Hallowed be thy name; etc.

What a difference there is in prayer! The same words may be used in this one or that, the same things may be asked, the same spirit even may pervade; and yet the one is helpful and uplifting, the other is not. One appeals to the soul, the other meets with no response.

The prayer you have just read illustrates all the best qualities. It is alive. The sentences are charged with vitality. There is, from first to last, the movement of which the writer has spoken before. The petitioner closes with a thought to which everything tends from the beginning,—a thought that ought to make the week a different one to every worshipper: “Make us strong and send us out to the duty of the week, with a clear consciousness of thy presence and willingness to help us.”

Prayer
Four

Help us to come into thy presence, O God, this day with a real joy in our hearts; and let body, and mind, and spirit turn willingly and joyfully unto thee, the Maker and Creator of us all, because thou hast prepared such goodly things for our feasting.

Our eyes are made glad by the approaching signs of spring. In all nature we feel the movement of that returning warmth which gladdens us and all living things upon thy earth. We thank thee for the pulse that beats at nature's heart, the tides of life, of power, of renewal, of resurrection, of the uprising of every force which comes from thee unto all created things. This, O Lord, is the vision and this the consciousness which dwells in us today.

We thank thee for the message of life, for the voice of joy, for the psalm as of those who came with glad hosannas, that is moving the lips of thy inanimate creation; and we pray thee that it may be filling our own hearts. And Lord God, we pray that we may also be made con-

scious of all those mighty throbbings and divine forces which are moving in thy spiritual creation. Wilt thou enlarge of the understanding within us that we may perceive thy footsteps coming down the roads of time, moving at the head of thy people, preparing them for the larger revelations which come with each succeeding age. O God, make us quick to perceive that the Lord cometh and that He is preparing a way before him by his messengers; and let us rejoice in the name of him who cometh in the name of the Lord, and who was the incarnation of the divine life here before the sons of men.

May we praise thee this day for Jesus Christ and all that that name means of benediction, of joy, of comfort, of hope and of life unto the sons of men. He came bringing good tidings. Help us to receive Him with hosannas. He came in thy name, O Lord, help us to hail him.

O Lord, in that season of religious meditation which awaits us this week, a

accidents; that our faith is in God, and by that faith the world is to be revolutionized and uplifted.

God, hear us in our prayer tonight; make us strong and send us out to the duty of the week, with a clear consciousness of thy presence, and willingness to help us; and grant that our souls may declare thee exultantly because they are full of hope, because the love of God is in our hearts. Hear us, O Lord. Bless us in this service. May it be acceptable in love for Christ's sake.

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O Lord, in that season of religious meditation which awaits us this week, a

preparation for the gladdest festival of the Christian year, may we be ready to be taught, listening for the Lord in whatsoever shall be spoken in the words of thy servants. Fit us, O Lord, to receive the message of the coming Easter time.

We pray this day for all who may not worship with us, all sick and weary ones, all those who are stricken and wounded in the combat with temptation, all those who wrestle against adversity, all those in far distant places who are looking to these altars with prayer today.

Bless this people and form them in the joy of thy gospel. May the word of the Lord prevail over our hearts, and may all the will of God be done in us, world without end. Amen.

This is a prayer of preparation for the Easter Service, as we learn from the words, "Fit us, O Lord, to receive the message of the coming Easter time." It is in entire harmony with the season and recognizes that there is one life and power in nature and in man; a power which stands revealed, in its highest form, in the person of Jesus Christ. This prayer can not be criticised from a scientific standpoint. To use a phrase from the Foreword, it "recognizes the advances in science and in all branches of knowledge," just as the most progressive preaching recognizes those advances. If this prayer may be taken as an indication, it is pretty certain that the preaching which goes with it has not fallen behind the times. There is no dust of mediævalism gathered upon that pulpit so thick as to invite the critical finger to write the Master's condemning question, "How is it that ye can not discern this time?"

Prayer
Five

Our Father in Heaven, we thank thee for this day, a day that makes possible this service of worship. We thank thee for the revelation of thyself. We thank thee for every providence of thine that has brought us to this hour. We thank thee for that knowledge of thee, that love for thee, which has led us to join today in this service. We pray that thy spirit may reveal its presence, that we may each receive a message from thee. Whatsoever Thou wouldst teach us, grant that we may have open hearts, teachable minds, so that we may receive the message as from thee.

Thou knowest through what experiences we have come to this hour, what struggles there have been, what sorrows have come, what joys have been ours, what successes or failures have attended us in the daily tasks and duties; but whatever have been the experiences of the past, may we today look toward thee and set our minds on things which are above, not on the things of earth.

We thank thee for this Church, for its record in the days past in its service for thee, for the Christian fellowship, for the instruction in the Word, for the spirit of Christ that has been revealed in its work. We pray that Thou wilt continue to bless its work, keep the hearts of its people united in Christian fellowship, enlarge their conception of their true position as a body of Christ. May they be blessed in the various activities of Christian service, the various departments of their work, in whatsoever they are seeking to build up Christian character and to win the unsaved through Christ, the only Redeemer.

Let thy blessing today rest upon the absent pastor and his wife. May the journey upon which they have gone result even more favorably than they have hoped, and may they be blessed in the days of absence from their people. May each, in the time appointed, return here brighter, stronger in heart and in body because of the peace that thou mayest bring to them in the days of absence.

We pray for thy blessings upon the sister church of which thy servant is pastor, and upon him who is bringing to them thy message at this time; and to that congregation let thy spirit be revealed. Bless and instruct and inspire them for Christian service.

Let thy blessing rest upon thy people everywhere, wheresoever they are gathered at this time, in hamlet, in city, in our own land or across the sea; wherever there are those who love thee, who are seeking today through worship to come into closer touch with thee, to understand thy character and receive thy spirit, we pray that thou wilt meet with them and bless them. May this Sabbath day be so improved in the gaining of the soul for the spiritual instruction and the mind for the winning of the unsaved that, at the close of the day, the hearts of thy people may rejoice and even Heaven itself rejoice because of souls that have sought the living Saviour. It is thy work. We know that without thee we can do nothing. So we pray that

thou wilt keep us by thy divine power so that we may be ever willing to do thy will. For thou hast taught us if we love thee we will keep thy commandments. We pray that thou wilt minister in thy way to every household that is here represented, to every interest that is right. Comfort the mourning and the sorrowing, and strengthen the sick and the feeble. Help to resist temptation those who may be under stress of temptation at this time. Help in the struggle those who, with faces toward thee, may find the way hard, the temptations and influences many to lead them to ways of sin. Thou art able, and we commend ourselves into thy care.

So we pray that the service this morning may minister to the strengthening of the heart and the instruction of the mind, that we may go forth better prepared to continue in our Christian life. May we above everything else look unto thee, love thee, serve thee.

We ask for Christ's sake. Amen.

**Note
Five**

This prayer, though not too long, tends to tediousness. There is very little movement in it. There are sentences, and even petitions in it, that retard its progress. The last sentence of the first paragraph ought to be stricken out, as it is simply a repetition, on a larger scale, of the one before it. After this paragraph, the prayer goes on very well till we come to the petition for the absent pastor, which is too long drawn out. A slight touch or delicate reference would be better. The same is true of the next petition, in which the preacher remembers his own church. The latter half would better be erased. It adds nothing and only blocks the way. The prayer ought to end with the words, "Thou art able and we commend ourselves to thy care." Everything that follows is superfluous. It has already figured two or three times in other shapes. With these changes, so it strikes the writer, the prayer would be much more direct and impressive.

O Lord, we pray that nothing may shut us out from the eye of God, from thy divine blessing, from thy divine help. We thank thee, O God, for all the advantages in the struggles of life in the crises that come to human hearts; comfort and strength and help may always be found in thee. We bless thee, O God, that while human arms have been weak to support and human wisdom has failed to direct, thy infinite wisdom, thy divine compassion, thy Almighty Strength, have been accorded those who have turned toward thee. We thank thee, O Lord of Heaven and Earth, that thou hast not kept thy good things from the gaze of those who are exalted, but hast made them for the poor and the lowly and for the burdened. We thank thee for the vision we have of thee, our Father, through Jesus Christ, our Saviour.

O Lord, we have the courage to come here this morning to thy house. O God, bless this congregation. Thou knowest every anxious heart; thou knowest every

burden; thou knowest every righteous soul; thou understandest all about us. Sometimes we have felt alone, and that no one cared for our soul, and that God had forgotten us, but we thank thee, our Saviour, when we have gone into thy house, when we have opened the message in that book, thou hast spoken to our hearts—we have been assured that not the smallest or lowest or poorest of all thy children has been forgotten by thee.

We thank thee, thou Infinite One, that as there is a father that pities his children, so the Lord will pity us. As the father is interested in, cares for, and sees far into the future for little ones, so thou dost. In thine almighty wisdom, in thine infinite compassion thou hast come to us. O Son of the Father, bring comfort to our soul; and we pray this morning in thy house that whatever may be the burden of our heart, whatever the vexations that come to us, whatever the test of our faith and our belief in others, and of the divine worship of the Al-

mighty God,—we pray to thee to bring light out of darkness, to bring faith and trust and rest and peace; and, O God, bless the light in our souls this morning and may every care and every burden and anxiety be left behind as we come to worship thee. May our souls enter this morning. Make our minds and our intellects to know thy mind and soul so inflamed with thy love, so directed toward righteousness, so conscious of the divine love of thee, that we shall be in harmony with the doctrine of God and the will of God and the love of God as revealed in Jesus Christ.

We thank thee, our Father, that thou dost direct not only the affairs of individuals, but that thou art directing the affairs of nations and races. Amidst all the struggles, bloodshed and suffering we pray thee, our Lord, that thou wilt so direct the affairs of men and of nations that all this distress shall combine with the forces that are working for righteousness. We think sometimes as we see the affairs of men that surely this is not

for the development of courage, not for righteousness. Lord God, haste the coming of peace. Speedily with thy will bring peace and harmony and union among the nations of the earth.

O, God, we pray that thou wilt bless our own nation. We thank thee, O Lord, for thy kindness to us. We thank thee for the land thou hast given us; we thank thee for its material worth; we thank thee for its vastness. We throw our hearts open to thee and pray that we may be allowed through thy will the enjoyment and benefit of these good things. O God, bless this nation, and in all the problems that come to us, give us the wisdom to deal with them. Give us the wisdom to deal with all the affairs of our great cities, and direct the affairs of all races of men seeking home, liberty and freedom. O Lord, may we be equal to the burdens thou layest upon us, and whether here or in some far-off island of the sea, away from those who are dear to us, strengthen our souls. Give the nation the wisdom and the direction and

the force that makes righteousness. We pray that our nation may be intelligent and prosperous. O God, bless the schools and universities of our great land. We pray for the wisdom and support of God for all those who are seeking the emoluments of life; may these all attain the best development of mind and heart; that Jesus Christ may reign, so that his triumph may come nearer. We pray that as Christianity is felt, Jesus may be exalted in their hearts.

O God, bless this congregation that worships thee today; bless any of our number who are not with us today. Comfort them. Some of them are sick and unable to be here; some of them are caring for others. We pray thee that Christ's life and love shall dominate all.

Our Father, who are in heaven, etc.

Amen.

This prayer is decidedly too loose in its construction and too wordy in its sentences. As a flag that flaps irresponsibly in the winds, tossed now this way and now that by every breeze that chances by, so the mind of the minister who made this prayer seems to have done a good deal of "flapping about" during the exercise. Every passing breeze of thought or emotion seems to have had its way. The prayer has the right spirit; it is so good and so earnest, that we can only wish it were better from the literary standpoint. The closing sentences of the third paragraph are almost incoherent; and the section devoted to our country suggests the caution of Jesus, "Use not vain repetitions."

Our Father, we pray David's prayer, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."

We pray the publican's prayer and smite upon the breast, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

We pray also the prayer that thou hast taught us to pray, "Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil," and we ask that we may walk in the footsteps of Jesus Christ who did no sin, neither was any guile found in his mouth.

Make us this week to be victorious, and when we come together next Sunday, bring us as thy sons and daughters who have been armored by Jesus Christ, by his mercy, and by his rich grace. God bless all of us as we lift our prayers to him.

God be our might unto death—O, beyond death, unto life that is immortal; and present us at the Throne of the Father without spot or blemish. We ask for thy great mercy's sake.

Amen.

**Note
Seven**

A sweet and beautiful prayer! In the atmosphere of its devout spirit and before its simple—yet almost faultless expression—criticism is silent. Read it again and again.

O God, thou hast done great things for us. Thou hast given unto us a beautiful land, a prosperous city, and a church where thy name is honored, and where in the sanctuary we have often met with our God; a church with a history; a church that has sent many members into glory; that has its representatives scattered the land over, who are enabled to do something for God and man. We pray that this consecration may be more universal, more complete.

Thou hast also given unto it personal relations to Jesus Christ that are so precious that figures cannot reckon their value. Thou hast given us peace of mind, being stayed on God, and lifted the burdens of sin from us by thy grace. Thou hast given to us adoption into thy family, with all that it signifies. Thou hast given to us also a Saviour, to comfort us in our times of sorrow, lightening the shadows by his presence in our hearts, enabling us to find peace, drying our tears by his sympathy and the assurance of his merciful love. We pray

thee this morning that thou wilt grant us recognition of all these things; that we may rejoice to discover the presence of God everywhere, and to hear his voice in all his providences, and to feel the sweet peace of comfort in his sympathetic presence.

Be very near this morning to those who have been called unto sorrow by the home-going of those so dear to them. Be near to them as their hearts are stricken and their homes lonely, and reveal thyself to them in thy love, ministering not only to them in times of prosperity but even more bountifully in times of grief; and may all those families who of late have been called to sorrow find their sorrows tempered by the assurance of the divine wisdom, the kindliness of the heart that has afflicted them, and the extreme mercy which has been granted unto those who are translated from this world into the kingdom of God. And we pray that in such sorrows as these we may all come to recognize that they are but incidental to our shaping into the

divine image, and that our God is a merciful one.

Grant us help this morning in our study and worship. Grant great power and wisdom and spiritual earnestness unto the work of sending teachers to mission schools, and may many here that are able be also ready to co-operate in this work of God.

Grant thy blessing unto us. We thank thee for the success which thou hast enabled thy people to achieve. We thank thee for the almost universal co-operation of this people. We thank thee for the sweet spirit of harmony and brotherly love that exists. God grant it may grow more and more intense, and that the power of God may rest upon us as a people. Grant wisdom to those who are outside the fold; lead their steps within; lead them to a higher consecration, a new consecration; lead them to see that the service of God is best, and that the recognition thereof is a noble deed, and worthy of them. May they draw near to Christ, and be true unto him. Grant thy

blessing to those that are still without the power and blessedness of thy divine presence in their hearts. Show them the wisdom of the step, that they may enter heartily upon the service of God. Save our souls from sin and from death, and pour thy spirit abundantly into our hearts.

May thy blessing rest upon every endeavor to draw near to thee in this worship. Grant thy blessing upon the nation. May thy peace come unto it, and out of the strife and turmoil of our land wilt thou advance the cause of civilization, and hasten the good time when the triumphs of the cross shall be more manifest, and when they shall be potent over the passions of men.

Bless our missionary work in all its branches. Bless those assembled this day in thy temples who are engaged in this work, and grant them abundant success in their efforts for the spread of thy kingdom.

We ask these blessings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

This prayer fulfils most of the conditions that have been laid down in our study. It is reverent; it breathes the sentiment of gratitude; it is broad and sympathetic. There is one paragraph too much, the last one, which repeats about mission work what has been said before. It is a great pity that the words, "and when they shall be potent over the passions of men," do not close the prayer. With this omission, the composition could not well be improved. It is with no ungracious intent that the writer suggests that the ideal of Paul must some day be realized, when men shall pray not only with the spirit, but also with the understanding. When that time comes, those who lead us in our public devotions will pay no less attention to the subject matter of prayer, but more to the form in which it takes shape.

**Prayer
Nine**

We thank thee, O God, for the return of this festival of the soul; we rejoice in this anniversary of the spirit of Zion, lit by the council of God and inspired by all those divine forces which belong, by the grace of God in Christ Jesus, to our human nature. We stand this morning with songs of triumph upon our lips, with glad psalms full of rich music in our hearts, lit with long rolling harmonies of hope, that swell and sweep on and on, beyond our thought, beyond our touch, beyond our sight, until we feel that the whole universe is listening and we are speaking to our Father, and there is no death any more, and the earth is supremely beautiful everywhere.

We are gathering this morning with the holy women around the sepulcher of our Master. Only a little while ago we saw him, we heard his words of truth and felt his loving arms around us. We saw our divine Christ, whatever he may be, or in whatever form he may come, laid away with the spices Nicodemus brought. Only last Sunday we re-

heard the character, the kindness and the mistakes of Nicodemus; to-day we rehearse the Resurrection; we hear the angel voices, the glad women, the skies above, all exclaim with one accord, "He is not here, he is risen and has gone into Galilee."

From that Galilee to our day and from that far away Holy Land to this land in which we have our efforts and our tasks, there is a long distance indeed, but there is no distance to our Father today. The flowers that were once gathered on Galilee are blossoming yet; great wreaths of white lilies have been taken with all their beauty and purity from the human soul and we bind a wreath today of hope, of expectations and of desires, and we stand by the grave of our conquering Saviour and we know that through him love and light have come to us.

But we are here today with our memories. There are mothers here this morning, that since last Easter have followed the dust of their little ones, whom last Easter time they looked upon with joy;

laps that are so vacant where the little ones played; kisses that are so far away; lips we are so desirous of pressing and bosoms in which childish sorrows hid themselves. O God, as we come to this service this morning by way of the cross, come thou with us, and as we stand by the graves, open through the power of Christ, may we hear him say again, "Suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Let us suffer our little ones to come unto him, that by coming unto him ourselves, we may meet them by and by.

There are those of us here this morning, who, while in the full strength of life, have found ourselves, within the last year since we met in the Easter dawn, confronted by the figure of death and the power of the grave; but we have looked back through the rift with eyes of faith and have felt no fear—all the way Christ hath supported us and we thank thee this morning that through his open grave there was made another

gateway than the gateway through which we carry our beloved forms; that there must be a gateway that opens out into the larger eternity, and we thank thee that we have the assurance of rest in our Lord Jesus Christ.

We are here today, the world with its joys and sorrows before us; our ideals, hopes and disappointments—we carry them deep in our hearts, they are locked in tomb-like sepulchers and we can do nothing with them, our Father. O, thou risen Christ, our Easter morning star, shine on today that we may know there is no grave in all the universe, no cemetery in all the cycles of time in which the power of the Resurrection does not work, and grant us to know that all things work together for good to them that love God.

Help us this morning, O Lord, in our offering. Help us to rejoice in the great light in which we stand; help us to send that light to others. May we stand above the earth with its dust and toil and trouble and with our eyes firmly fixed

on thee, may we bear all our sorrows and use all our courage that we may claim an acquaintance in thy kingdom, a citizenship in heaven. May we know that we belong to something beyond the earth while we labor on the earth. Speed the glad day when God shall reign and make us helpers to this great end, we ask in the name of our Master and Lord. Amen.

This prayer is another that belongs to the Easter season.

**Note
Nine**

It is full of the hope and assurance of immortality.

It is calculated to inspire the same hope and assurance in the breast of the worshipper. There is an earnest soul behind it all, and that earnestness and faith must be contagious.

The sentences have a rapidity and rush that bear the worshipper on to the culminating thought, "May we know that we belong to something beyond the earth, while we labor on the earth."

The intensity of the thought and the rapidity of the sentences very naturally result in some superfluous expressions; but none of these are dead. They are all alive, even though they are not needed. Generally superfluous expressions are dead and lumbering, but not so here. The tree is over-luxuriant and may stand pruning very well, but the sap has gone into every branch and twig.

There is one real blemish, it seems to the writer. "Only last Sunday, we rehearsed the character, the kindness and the mistakes of Nicodemus." It is a serious question how far we may make such references. It seems wiser to reserve them for the sermon. If the sermon was one of a series, this would be perfectly proper.

We may preach a series of sermons; we do not make a series of prayers.

Almighty and ever living God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Author of our being and Giver of everlasting life, we come with joy into thy house this morning; glad to know the Gospel of the risen Lord; glad to join with the multitudes of the people of earth and with the multitudes of the redeemed in heaven, in celebrating the day on which the Lord Jesus Christ rose in triumph from the dead.

Help us, O God, as we come into thy courts, to come in the spirit of reverence, of faith, of hope and of great joy. May we worship thee in all the beauty of holiness, in sincerity, and in truth. May we know thee as the God of all power, as the center of all truth, as the source of all life. In thee we live and move and have our being; and we rejoice to know that this, our being, is immortal in God, and that through our Lord Jesus Christ this being—this immortal being—may enjoy everlasting life; something more than immortality, the joy of immortality, the holiness of

immortality, all the blessed moral possibilities of immortality; eternal life in Jesus Christ.

Grant, our Father, that upon this congregation there may come the sweet light of heaven, and may every heart be opened to receive that light. But if there should be one in this congregation that has not the blessing of everlasting life, one here that has not felt the power of Christ in regeneration, may there come such light to that poor heart, such a touch of the Divine life and power, as that a new life shall begin for him, a new heaven shall stretch its glory above and a new earth spread out its beauty beneath. May old things pass away and may all things become new; new by the power of him who raised Jesus Christ to a new life; new by that Almighty Power which promised to raise all that are in their graves to life again!

We pray, O God, that there may be given to our souls that spiritual power that will raise us into newness of life; that we may see a new world, see the

new possibilities of a new life, see all that God would have us be and all that God would have us enjoy. May we, in the experience of this new life; may we, by the power of this resurrection, this very morning, this happy day, know what the new life is; the life that is hidden with Christ in God! May we enter upon this life of prayer and self sacrifice; this life of gentleness and sympathy and good works; this life of joy and purity and everlasting hope; this life that is possible only to those who believe in Jesus Christ and have faith in the regenerating influence of the Divine Spirit! May every heart rejoice on this morning in the resurrection power, and every soul know this eternal life in Jesus Christ!

Forgive the sins that we have committed against thee, the pure and holy One, who canst not look upon sin with the least degree of allowance. Help us with thy blessed influence to shun sin; and grant, our Father, that having been raised to this new life, having been led

out into this new world, this new universe, we may all live to the praise and glory of God; may live as the citizens of heaven and may look upon this life and this world as but the time and place of our journeying thither. Good Father, come to each one of us with the blessed influences of the Divine Spirit, to awaken us to greater knowledge of life's possibilities, to awaken us to higher and holier aspirations, to awaken us to the idea of a grander existence, to awaken us to the spirit of the Christ in this life, that henceforth we may see what the Christ was in this world, and like him be a light and a benediction to it. Has not the Lord said of his disciples, "Ye are the light of the world?" Oh, may this light, having been kindled anew in our souls by the blessed hope of the resurrection, shine out into the darkness of this world; and may the blessed story of the Cross, the story of the redemption of man by Jesus Christ, the story of Christ's glorious resurrection, reach the hearts of all the sons of men! May

the wounded and broken hearted be bound up; may the crushed spirit be made strong and may those who walk in darkness see the true light!

O, thou Christ of pity, thou Christ of love, we rejoice this morning that thou art risen in the hearts of men, risen in all the world, as conqueror, as Lord, and as King; and wherever the Gospel is preached by minister or missionary, wherever it is taught in church, or home, or asylum, or hospital, or prison, or in the field, or in the distant camp; wherever it is taught; may hearts repent of their sins; may they believe in the risen Christ; may they be saved and transformed into the beauty and glory of His own righteousness!

The Lord comfort us by all the sweet ministries of this Easter day. Visit the sick with peace and healing; visit the dying with the vision of immortality; visit the afflicted and the mourning with the blessed prospect and anticipation of reunions in the skies; visit all men with the Gospel of resurrection and of hope!

May thy blessing be upon the members of the Church, and upon the strangers within our gates! Move our hearts to worship thee. Bless our homes, and our children, and all the interests that are precious to us and to our loved ones! May we be prosperous in all things! May God grant us success in all our worthy enterprises, and may we live and act and do our work as the servants and sons of God!

May thy blessing rest upon our beloved country; let prosperity be with its people; and may they study to practice that righteousness which exalteth a nation, and to put away sins, which are a reproach to any people!

May thy blessing rest upon thy servant, the president of the United States; upon him and his household! Comfort and heal the sick, and have in thy care now and ever those whom thou hast loved and honored! Bless his councilors; and bless thy servants, the members of both Houses of Congress; bless all those who by thy providence are in

high places and responsible positions, that they, in the fear of God and the love of the people, may work steadfastly toward and lead the country into the true paths of prosperity, of liberty and of national welfare!

We pray thy blessing upon all men, and all governments of the earth. And grant, O God, that this Easter morning may find all the earth at peace; may there be no battle upon this day; may all combatants rest upon their arms, and think of him who is the Prince of Peace! And do thou, O Father, cause all wars and contentions to cease and bring about a universal and eternal peace!

Hear our prayers, O God; accept our offering of joy and praise and faith and thanksgiving; and aid us in our worship, and bestow upon us the comfort we must have, through Jesus, who taught us all to pray: "Our Father, etc., etc."

Note
Ten

This prayer is too long.

It would be too long even if it were much better.

It starts out splendidly.

The second paragraph brings the worshipper into a real sense of the meaning of immortality.

The third beautifully expresses the desire that all mankind may enter into the true knowledge of immortal life.

Here the prayer, for the occasion upon which it was delivered, might well have stopped.

At the next point, that rocking-horse motion, which is without progress, begins.

In the preceding section, a strong and beautiful figure has been used, "a new life shall begin for him, a new heaven shall stretch its glory above and a new earth spread out its beauty beneath." This is fine and impressive. But in the paragraph following the same idea is re-

peated and weakened, and the same figure is reproduced without its original strength.

If the preacher could not bring himself to stop at the point before mentioned, he certainly should have finished with the fifth section, beginning, "Forgive the sins," and ending with, "May those who walk in darkness see the true light."

After this, with the exception of the petitions for our country, there is nothing but elaboration of ideas already well expressed.

It is not necessary to pray for all proper and worthy objects in the same supplication. We ought to remember our country, indeed; but if, in order to do so, an Easter prayer must be unduly prolonged, it would not be out of place to postpone that particular object a week.

Each prayer ought to have a definite purpose and a distinct individuality.

If anything like this has appeared before, in these notes, it will not appear again; for this is the place for the minister who has made the comments and who has been brought face to face with the beam in his own eye while he has been picking the motes out of the eyes of his brethren,—this is the place for him to say Amen!

Summary.

The publisher has suggested that it might be a good thing to make a brief summary of the results of this study; for it has been a study, and a very useful and important one to the writer, if not to the reader.

**Spirit
Of
This
Study**

If the reader had any misgivings, when he ventured upon this little book, that the spirit of it would be that of levity or irreverence, we trust he understands by this time, that the purpose was serious, however badly it may have been executed.

**Literary
Conditions**

Most of the prayers here reported are of a high order and fulfill to a remarkable degree what we have been obliged to call the literary conditions.

They are also in harmony with modern knowledge. We have not noted a single petition that would involve the suspension or reversal of a law of nature. The old idea once so prevalent in religious thought and once so prominent in the prayers of the pulpit, of supernatural intervention in affairs that are governed by general laws or that depend upon human foresight or effort, seems to have dropped out completely.

**Consistent
With
Modern
Thought**

Just as this study is finished, however, a curious recudescence of this obsolete notion comes to hand, in one of the most prominent religious journals of the country,—“moved by the serious nature of the crisis in China, Dr. Wardlaw Thompson, Secretary of the London Missionary Society, has cabled a call to the churches of America to unite with the churches of Great Britain in special prayer to God for the signal interposition of his hand at this time. Wednesday, June 20, was especially suggested as a time for simultaneous prayer.”

It may be all well enough to do the praying; but the one manifest duty in such a crisis is for those inpower to get troops into China as rapidly as possible.

An armed force will go a long way towards backing the prayers and making them effective.

The prayers that have been reviewed in the course of this study are prayers of aspiration, of gratitude, of communion with the divine life and love, of sympathy for our fellow-men. These are the great elements of prayer, and these are not wanting.

Prayers
Of
Aspiration

These prayers are all characterized by that which is greatest of all, submission to the will of God, desire to be brought into harmony with his plans, to sink our individual wishes and claims in the universal purpose.

Submission
To
Divine
Purpose

We can not do better than quote these words from the current number of the Outlook:

"The denials of God are as much answers to prayer as are his silences or his responses. Shakespeare saw this distinctly, great psychologist as he was, when he said:

'We, ignorant of ourselves,
Beg often our own harms, which the
wise powers
Deny us for our good: so find we profit
By losing our prayers.'

Gain
In
Loss

Probably no one will read these words who cannot look back at some cherished hope or some passionately loved purpose, the denial of which brought at the moment sorrow and something like despair; that denial, however, seen in the light of to-day, stands out as the greatest piece of good fortune. Many a man has striven for some special position upon which he had set his heart, some special specific opportunity which seemed to him the only open door to fortune, and when the position slipped through his fingers, or the opportunity went in some other direction, it seemed as if life had ended; but, looking back after a decade, it is often evident that the loss of the position and the missing of the opportunity were the very things which opened the way for a higher and broader success. Our prayers are limited by our knowledge, but they are answered out of the wisdom of God. For that reason they are perhaps as often denied as granted, and in the denial the petitioners are most truly heard."

The reader will have noticed how often the Lord's Prayer is used in closing. We trust the congregations are given an opportunity to join. A plain man said the other day, "The ministers have been at it for 1800 years, but they have not improved very much on the old prayer."

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